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WAR AND WILDLIFE

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There has been much speculation regarding the effects that World War II will have on wildlife. Wildlife administrators, conservation organizations, members of Congress, and others have made inquiries as to the prospects and also concerning the possible effect of the war on funds available for the protection and restoration of wildlife. In order to give somewhat intelligent answers to these questions, a study was made of the effects of World War I. Data on various factors over a continuous period of years, beginning before the last war and ending after the war, were collected from State game departments and other sources. These made possible an enlightening analysis of the situation during the last war. It was not possible to obtain accurate information from all of the States as several did not have game departments in the year 1916, some of the departments were young at that time with incomplete records, while others of the State agencies could not locate records covering the last war period. It was possible, however, to get sufficient data from which to make a definite analysis of the subject. Many persons have predicted that one effect of the present war would be to decrease materially the funds available for wildlife management. Contrary to this belief, the data compiled from 22 States from which accurate figures were obtained showed that there was on the whole a gradual increase in funds available to the States for wildlife conservation through the previous war period, and a much larger increase immediately following the war. Stating this in definite figures, there was an increase in funds of 5 percent from 1916 to 1917, 8 percent from 1917 to 1918, and 20 percent from 1918 to 1919. Only three States out of the 22 indicated any appreciable decrease in funds for wildlife purposes, while the others reported either a nearly constant amount of funds or an increase in funds during the war period.

It has been often stated also that the present war would cause a decrease in the number of hunters and sport fishermen. Yet the data covering the last World War showed that there was a gradual increase in the number of hunters and sport fishermen during the war and a pronounced increase immediately following. The increases were 1.6 percent from 1916 to 1917, 2.6 percent from 1917 to 1918, and nearly 30 percent immediately after the war from 1918 to 1919. Only four States reported a slight decrease.

While it is true that a considerable portion of our population is serving in the armed forces, many of these individuals are not hunters or fishermen. Of those who are sportsmen, many are replaced on the fishing streams and hunting fields by workers on war projects who can now better afford to hunt and fish, and by novices in military training camps who, for the first time, have been exposed to the lure of outdoor recreation. Also, many sportsmen in the armed services will be able to do some hunting and fishing during the period of their military training. Another factor that will tend to keep up the number of those who will go hunting and fishing is the normal increase in population which brings forward each year a considerable number of persons who have reached the age for active participation in these sports. Available data show that years of financial depression brought more reducing effects on the finances of the various State game departments and on the number of persons engaged in hunting and fishing than did the war years. The information at hand and a study of the present situation indicate that during the year 1942, the first year of the present war for the United States, the number of persons who will seek recreation in hunting and fishing will not be materially less than in 1941. There probably will be fewer man days of hunting and fishing because many will be too busy helping to win the war to spend much time with hunting guns and fishing tackle. Furthermore, increased income taxes will lessen the number of days that many are able to devote to favorite sports. Inability to purchase automobiles and tires also will decrease the number of days the hunters and fishermen can engage in field recreation; and, no doubt, will tend to decrease the number of persons who will hunt and fish, but in a much less degree. There will be more pooling of automobile transportation and use of other means of travel. Certain classes of persons who generally depend on hunting and fishing for their recreation will be able to obtain automobile tires, and they will, no doubt, share transportation with some of the less fortunate sportsmen.

Although it is true that the war will reduce materially or even stop the manufacture of sporting arms and ammunition, the best information obtainable indicates that there are sufficient stocks of ammunition and arms in the hands of sportsmen and dealers to take care of hunting needs at least for this year and probably for another year or longer. It should be noted, also, that except for a very limited number of items, sporting arms and ammunition have no value as equipment for organized military forces.

Many war-time factors, some of which have been mentioned, are now coming into effect and will have influences on the wildlife of this country. Those engaged in wildlife management are being requested by certain groups to stop all hunting and sport fishing during the war. Many arguments are used, among which are the necessity of saving for war purposes, ammunition and materials that go into its manufacture; saving of gasoline and automobile tires; and the preserving of game for men in the military services when they return. Also, the argument is presented that now is the opportune time to give wildlife a chance to increase abundantly and thus insure its conservation. It must be remembered, however, that what

is good game management in times of peace is also good game management in times of war. Wildlife plays an important part in peace-time recreation, and should play an important part in war-time recreation. Under war conditions recreation is extremely important in keeping up the national morale. Furthermore, good game management includes the wise harvesting of a game crop which is renewable from year to year, provided sufficient breeding stock is retained. In addition to furnishing recreation, the proper harvesting of the game crop can and does supply valuable food. There are more than 900,000 big game animals, including deer, elk, moose, and antelope killed in the United States each year, which at an average of only 90 pounds each, dressed, represent about 81,000,000 pounds of meat. It is estimated that during the last year 15,000,000 waterfowl, 20,000,000 rabbits, 15,000,000 upland game birds, and more than 4,000,000 other small game were killed, which, averaging only one pound each dressed, would supply an additional 54,000,000 pounds of food. This makes a total of 135,000,000 pounds of meat in game animals and birds, to which can be added the game fishes taken to replace meat needed in our war effort. There are more than 12,000,000 sport fishermen in the United States, and it is conservatively estimated that each of these will catch on the average more than 25 pounds of fish per year. In fact, information available shows that the average catch is above 30 pounds in many States; in California it is known to exceed 50 pounds. However, on the basis of an average of only 25 pounds of sport fish annually for each fisherman, there is supplied in this country each year 300,000,000 pounds of game fish. Altogether this adds up to 435,000,000 pounds of food available from the annual harvest of game animals, game birds, and game fishes. According to the Quartermaster Corps of the United States Army, the meat allowance per soldier each day is 18 ounces, but the full quantity is not always supplied. Using this generous ration of meat as a unit, the 435,000,000 pounds of wild game and game fish used in American homes would replace enough beef, pork, poultry, commercial fish, and other meat to furnish each year sufficient of this food to an army of 5,000,000 men for more than 77 days. It is important to note also that with proper management, this valuable contribution to our war effort can be made annually without damage to the resource.

The Fish and Wildlife Service does not advocate letting down the bars so as to permit more killing of game to make a supply of meat immediately available. We should protect the breeding stock and harvest only the surplus that becomes available from year to year. Despite this reasonable principle, officials entrusted with the welfare of the nation's wildlife are urged by certain groups as a war measure to permit a raid on our game so as to furnish an unusual and immediate supply of food and to economize on the expenditures necessary to protect and maintain our wildlife resources. To the uninformed some of these proposals may be very plausible; and to the game hog and the man who wants to profit financially on our game, the argument that we discard many of the game laws, discharge the game wardens, and stop the salaries of game technicians and administrators is like a message from heaven. During the first World War a very few States accepted such arguments, liberalized their laws, and cut down enforcement activities in connection with certain wildlife species. In so doing, a dependable source of food was immediately and

greatly decreased, which, in some instances, has not yet been restored. Fortunately, this occurred in only a very few instances, and in most States game resources were adequately maintained through the war period.

As in most wars, a food shortage existed during the last World War. It resulted in a strong demand for liberalization of game laws so that wildlife could be immediately utilized in large quantities. Evidence is not lacking to indicate that the movements were encouraged by persons desiring to profit by the commercial sale of game and also by those wishing to carry on unlimited hunting and fishing. The matter was presented to the United States Food Administration, and after careful investigation and study the administration came to the conclusion that since wildlife conservation laws had been needed in peace and had operated to maintain from year to year a more abundant food supply, it was even more important that the restrictions should be continued and adequately enforced in war time so as to provide a continuing source of food.

Furs are important to the war effort as they are used to provide parts of clothing for soldiers who have to fight in the colder climates and for the clothing of aviators. During the first World War, civilian and military demands for furs brought about a decrease in a few species of fur-bearing animals in several localities, and a few States permitted the taking of larger numbers of fur animals which reduced the breeding stock in some instances to such an extent that the animals have made little recovery. The raw fur business in this country represents an industry valued at about $60,000,000 annually. Although furs should be utilized, their use should be reasonable and not so extensive as to prevent maximum annual production.

During World War I, wildlife suffered in the vicinity of military training camps, and there is evidence that the same thing is occurring now. This indicates that we may expect a very noticeable increase in hunters when the war is over, as many young men for the first time are learning the use of firearms and the recreational possibilities of hunting. As stated previously, the number of hunters and sport fishermen increased nearly 30 percent immediately following the last World War. The probability of a similar increase after the present war is a good reason for conserving our game wisely and in sufficient numbers so that men who risked their lives in the war may be able to enjoy hunting and fishing when they come back.

It is difficult to determine accurately what will happen to wildlife as a result of the present war by drawing conclusions from the effects of the last one. From all sides we hear that this war is different, and, indeed, it is different in several respects. It covers more territory and influences directly the activities of more of our people. More materials and food are needed. Personal transportation is restricted. We will have a larger army and a larger navy than in 1917 and 1918. Also, our nation's population is larger. Nevertheless, history tends to repeat itself, and it is probable that we can profit much in wildlife administration by using the experience gained in the last war.